

HELP

A call to our Friends

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UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Pull of Beauty

February-March 1996

Curated by Kiki Smith and Victoria Milos

This exhibition uses architectural hardware as a means to explore the role of the decorative. In our time the idea of a pure rational form has been degraded from a universal truth to an optional aesthetic. As we leave the original ideals and later severity of modernism, we are without a constructive, communicative and optimistic philosophy. Architectural hardware is an important and enduring expression of the architect. A light switch can be a personal message from the designer to the one whose hand turns the switch. That aspect of messive, of communication from the designer is the central theme behind this exhibition.

"Pull of Beauty" will present architectural hardware commissioned from artists and designers, including: Martin Puryear, Joel Fisher, Ted Muehling, Constantin Boym & Laurence Leon, Richard Tuttle, Martine Bedin, Beth Katieman, Tom Joyce and others. This presentation will be complemented with historical and currently available hardware. An accompanying symposium on the questions of beauty and the decorative will be held at Dia Center for the Arts during the exhibition.

Adriaan Geuze West 8 April-May 1996

The work of West 8, a Rotterdam based studio of architects, city planners, and industrial designers led by landscape architect Adriaan Geuze, illustrates the increasing importance of landscape architecture in today's urban expansions and resource depletion. Fittingly, Geuze's projects are about designs and ideas of re-incorporating available spaces and places, and on the re-arrangements of urban demolition and dumping sites. Willing to negotiate within existing contexts, rather than up ending them, his attitude on design is anti-monumental. Fitting with the Dutch history of claiming land from the sea, his view of landscape is not about reclaiming or returning to nature but rather appropriate artificialization of the given nature. And like the Dutch "polders," Geuze's landscape, thus, is about creating generous yet open platforms upon which other and unforeseen events can rise above it. Contrary to the secondary role of landscape architecture, having to vegetate or sculpt around the buildings, Geuze often seeds plans and strategies from which architecture can emerge.



Lt. Petrosino Park Redevelopment Design Competition 1996

Adjacent to Storefront, at the intersection of Cleveland Place, Kenmare and Lafayette streets sits an irregularly surfaced concrete wedge surrounded by a wrought iron fence. Long neglected and under utilized as a public space, this semi-park presents itself an important opportunity for Storefront's program of building projects. In collaboration with the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, and with support from the City Council member Kathryn Freed, Storefront has initiated a multi-phase project to re-design the park as an active and articulated public space. Following the new facade of Storefront by Yita Accorci and Steven Holl, Storefront turns the corner, to make another contribution to the built environment of this community.

Selected entries will be exhibited at Storefront in September 1996, and winning designs will be selected for consideration by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. For further information and schedule on the project, please write to:

Giordano Pozzi, Project Director
Lt. Petrosino Park Redevelopment Project
Storefront for Art and Architecture
97 Kenmare Street
New York, NY 10012

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1989-93

12 December - 27 January, 1996

Jean Nouvel's Architecture Shop

STOREFRONT

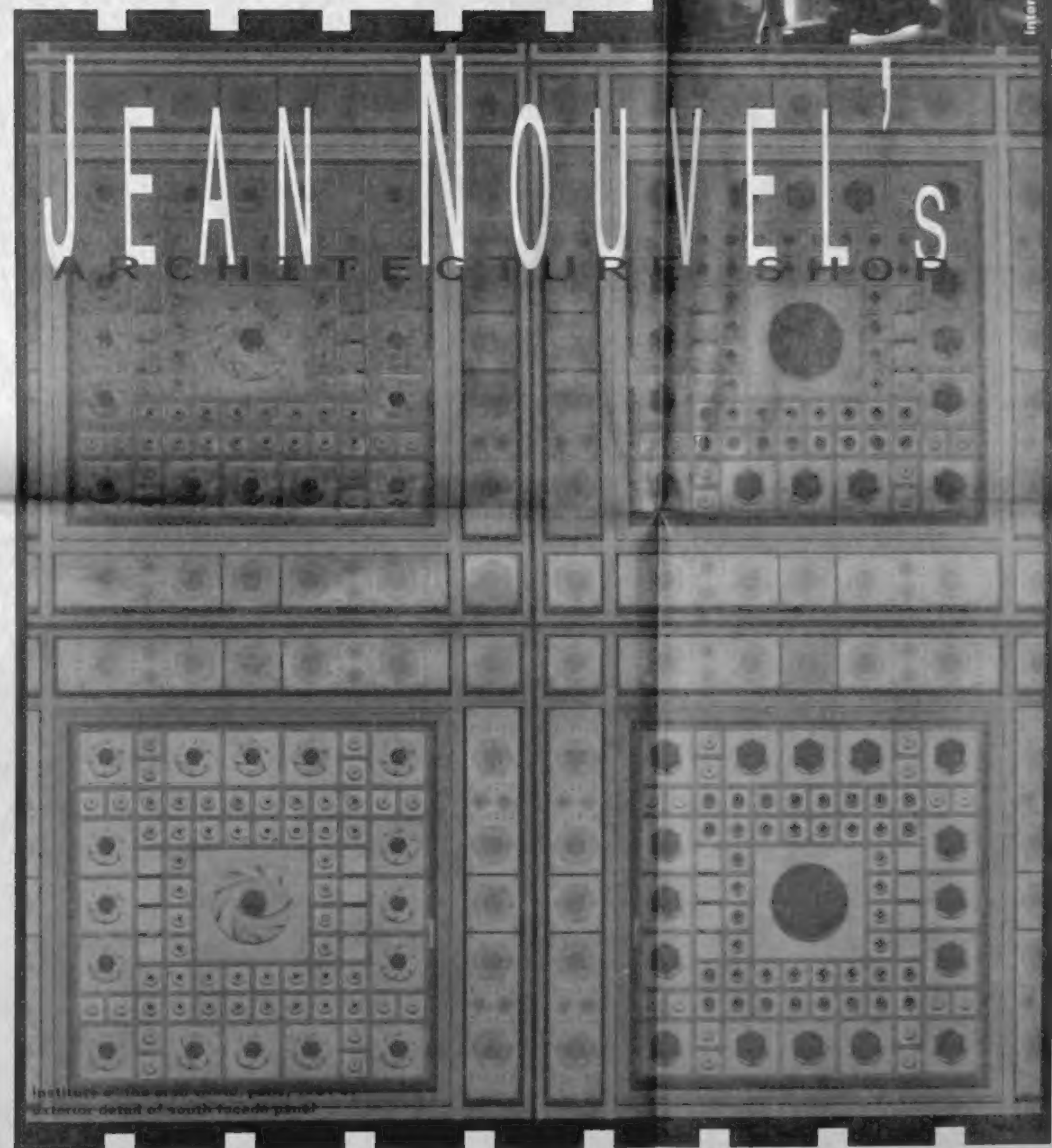
ART AND ARCHITECTURE
97 KENMARE STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10012, U.S.A.

LECTURE

Jean Nouvel
Recent Works

Wednesday, December 13
6:30 pm

Wood Auditorium
Acery Hall
The Graduate School of Architecture, Planning,
and Preservation
Columbia University



Interior detail of south facade panel

Storefront is supported by:

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and Friends

December 12 - January 27, 1996
opening reception: December, 12, 6-8pm
gallery hours: Tuesday-Saturday 11-6pm

This exhibition has been made possible through the generous support of Etant Donnes/
The French American Foundation for Contemporary Art, and Peckham France.

STOREFRONT

art + architecture
97 Kenmare Street, New York, NY 10012, USA tel: 212.431.5795 fax: 212.431.5755

EXHIBITION

Jean Nouvel's
Architecture Shop

December 12-January 27, 1996
Opening Reception: December 12, 6-8pm
Gallery Hours: Tuesday-Saturday, 11-6pm

Jean Nouvel's Architecture Shop

This is not a conventional exhibition of architecture. You will be asked to make some decisions and evaluate the situation presented. Gaze through the racks of postcards depicting Mr. Nouvel's buildings as slide projectors click through related images. Consider the plastic tubes of posters and packets of slides of earlier projects (all for sale) underneath video monitors, or peruse the selection of books available. Where are the architectural drawings and models? Are the reproductions shorthand explanations? This is not what you anticipated? The anticipation of convention needs some disruption.

Jean Nouvel's Architecture Shop is, on one hand, exactly what its title proclaims—a shop. For Storefront for Art & Architecture, this project raises many issues, that, frankly, are a bit disorienting. In the context of Nouvel's work, the shop exists on many levels, from a site-specific adaptive re-use to an alternate reality.

Re-use for us is inevitable. Undoubtedly, New York City is the site of continual change. Change is so routine that the transformation of a favorite neighborhood shoe repair shop into the latest outpost of a national chain engenders only the briefest moment of reverie. This passage from an earlier identity to the next is characteristic of Jean Nouvel's work as well, which has frequently been described as "cinematic." In the cinema, this can be a tense moment, full of anticipation as—*who knows?* Maybe day will change to night.

The alternate realities Nouvel offers in this temporary "shop" produce their own tense moments as each viewer must confront the displays to make a decision on how to react. Is the shop an exhibit that is a parody of a shop, a critique of architecture's complicit participation in the capitalist structure, or is it simply a shop? If it is a shop, is one to participate and buy something? If so, what to buy?

To follow the cinematic analogy there are parallel realities in film and in Jean Nouvel's architecture. While the techniques of film serve as a recording device that creates narratives and effects through representational images of experience, there is a simultaneous immediate experience in real time. Nouvel's work exists at the vanishing point on the horizon between these two experiences—the intellectual understanding of the narrative created from the given images and the corporeal reality of participating in it. The recognition of the living itself is of less relevance in Nouvel's work than the visceral sensations and disorientation that precede identifying these sensations and describing the situation.

Watching a film—whether it is the hallucinatory future of Blade Runner, the post-apocalyptic extravaganzas of Water World or the puritan New England of The Scarlet Letter—no matter what period of time it refers to, there is an inextricable present tense to space through which reality prevails and you are sitting there watching a series of projected images. Similarly, being inside a building and experiencing architecture is always in the present tense, even if the exposed tin ceiling makes you think of turn-of-the-century New York. As an immediate spatial experience, time exists in two states—within the limits of the physical space (a present-time experience) and in a mental space of memory, fantasy, imaging and intellect (all your experiences reconstituted from remembered indices). The mental space has no actual space of its own, but instead is nematic and ever expanding as it absorbs and processes information. Although autonomous, mental space responds to catalysts offered by direct experience and physical situations. So, while the experience of real space is in motion (filmic), the



galerie lafayette, berlin, 1990



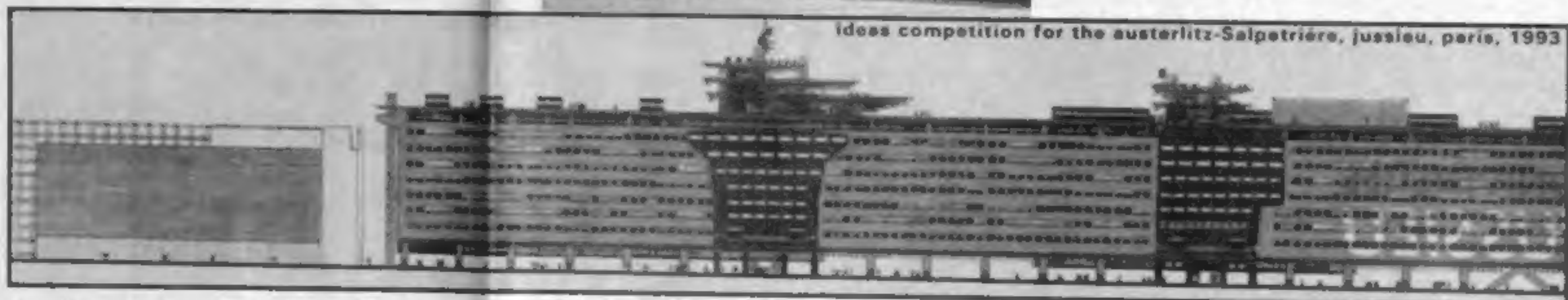
complementary mental space that accompanies it is undeniably affected by the stasis of memory. This combination is characteristic of processing imagery, the difference between them the difference between the static and the dynamic.

Jean Nouvel's work acknowledges this point of coincidence between real space and time and illusory effects. Where are you at an exhibit? Like at the movies, you are right there, but at the same time your roving mental space is there too, infusing the present with visual clues and past associations. At Nouvel's Galerie Lafayette building in Berlin, the building is used as both a transmitter of effect and a space for it. Situated at the intersection of two of the city's largest thoroughfares, billboard sized screens transmit images and light to passing traffic. The building is clad in a series of perched spaces, including an un-enclosed street level, that afford glimpses of the inside to those on the outside and bring pedestrians inside. As lines of brand names appear as text ribbons surrounding the upper levels, this major department store announces its functions, and displays its effects to create an event. Nouvel's much smaller shop in New York uses the similar effects of declaratory display, this time with images of his own work.

Known best perhaps as the architect of one of former French President Francois Mitterrand's grands projets, The Institute of the Arab World, Jean Nouvel's mature work was preceded by work, that, although it occupied a smaller stature, initiated the fundamental tenets that would accompany it forward. Before the Institute of the Arab World, the Cartier Foundation headquarters and the Lyon Opera House, Nouvel's controversial work coincided ideologically with the militancy of May '68, and the student activism and social upheaval that consumed Europe and the United States. Nouvel has long been a champion of an active city space and architecture that encourages it.

To produce these active spaces, Jean Nouvel's projects collapse many of the clues and methods frequently used to codify experience and reorder them for use in other scenarios. Through his work with scenographers, Nouvel's situations can become all encompassing, eliminating material or conceptual distance between subject and object, viewer and viewed, altering the dynamic of passive fascination to one of more direct involvement. In his use of transparent glass in projects such as the Institute of the Arab World and the Cartier Foundation in Paris or the Galerie Lafayette building in Berlin, the people and events passing through the structures are visible elements and part of the spectacle, as visitors to the shop exhibit become participants in the event. By incorporating viewers as actors, Nouvel constructs situations that are capable of short circuiting the one-way linear distance between subject and object. Sensory understanding of this sort bridges the gap created by fascination from a distance (watching a depiction of a sensation) and gaining access to objects or effects of desire.

The space for individual participation at Jean Nouvel's Architecture Shop is perhaps the most direct experience many



ideas competition for the austerlitz-Salpetrière, jussieu, paris, 1993

of us will have with his architecture. How many have visited the Cartier Foundation building? How many have visited the Eiffel Tower for that matter, or the Golden Gate Bridge? Of those who have, what is the difference between being there and looking at a picture of there? A lot, you answer? If architecture in the age of mechanical reproduction can reduce all the toil (mental and physical) of creating a building to an after image removed from scale, tactile reality, weather, auditory surround, what more could you ask for in this exhibit, where you are not only surrounded by a new space, but countless images to consider and possibly take home?

Nouvel's shop will be a surprise for anyone expecting an exhibition, as it was for Storefront. The set up calls for reappraisals of earlier expectations. Re-configuring a situation via the insertion of an event into a given set of conditions, a tactic pioneered by the Dadaists' walks and the Situationists' derive and manifestations, actively shapes passage and experience rather than conforming to a pre-selected series of options. Surrounded by endless choices—what color t-shirt, what brand of glass cleaner or what to watch on television, we are the legitimate heirs to the detached consumer-observers described by Baudelaire's flâneur who strolled among the crowds as a spectator, or Walter Benjamin's observations of the arcade wanderers.

This evolution to a passive consumer citizenry began at the end of the 19th century, as industrial advances generated demographic shifts that in turn filled urban centers to capacity. Meritocracy, diversions from the everyday rose in scale and popularity among those who occupied the crowded metropolis. The theatrical techniques and everwrought histrionics of these displays produced phantasmagoria so all-consuming that they created alternate realities. From department stores to exposition halls, all types of forums took

their lead from theater's convincing displays of overwhelming appearances and physical stimulation to generate an artificial but convincing appearance of reality.

The widespread production of these effects has turned the city itself into a theater, with architecture but one of the elements that fills the sets of personal experience as we pass through them. This brings us back to the cinematic conditions described earlier. The illusions in this case, and the images that comprise it, are created not only by individual scenarios, but by the entire surrounding environment.

In response to this passivity induced by standing back and looking, The Situationists in the 1960's, developed a theory of "psycho-geography" which sought to build new links with our surroundings through carving up maps and introducing other inversions of the norm. The ensuing disorientation offered an opportunity to re-invigorate contact with the environment and breed new desires.

The disorientation between new ways of approaching old attitudes, or the interface between the theatrics of the unexpected and the real world characterizes the content of Nouvel's work. Placing a greater emphasis on producing site specific effects to re-invigorate thought and perception rather than merely building consistent arrangements of geographic tropes, Nouvel's work mediates between each site's contemporary circumstance and historical roots. Just as the material associations of Nouvel's glass transparencies protrude, combine and recede from sensory perception, so do the meanings of his projects.



tour sains-fin, la defense, paris, 1989

an antidote has been necessary. This antidote, anesthesia, thus, numbs critical appraisal of aesthetic stimuli by replacing reaction with passive acceptance. Anesthetics make daily life less jarring, fending off potential shocks to an already full neurological fuse box. Reliance on anesthetic judgment encourages the growth and spread of shorthand, short cuts and signs that represent experience. Easily digestible, these signs do not require full comprehension of meaning or their repercussions, existing instead in a closed system of values made up of other signs with distant cousins in reality. These signs gradually replace the real forms they were derived from. Anesthetic realities are truly an opposite to sensory perception—an aesthetics of disappearance.

Disappearance and reappearance in theater accompanies a scene change. We anticipate something will happen following the arrival or dismissal of a known. Building on this anticipation by assembling associations and signs as characters and backdrops, Jean Nouvel's work produces an intensification of this moment. As the CLM/B800 building hovers conceptually between a boat and a building, The Tour-Sains-Fin, an as yet unrealized tower at La Defense, Paris hovers materially, as it disappears into the sky through progressively slimmer volumes and transparent materials, rewriting the concept of an architectural monument as something that has been seen as fatally solid and permanent into something that can be potentially fragile and mutable, positing the possibilities of an unstable architectural object. Jean Nouvel's exhibition at Storefront can be seen differently by different individuals depending on when they came in, how much or what kind of information they are prepared with or their expectations of an exhibit or a shop. According to these variables, the image disappears and reappears in different forms. Like the city, Nouvel argues, architecture is not a static entity, but a dynamic relationship between shifting conditions.

In Jean Nouvel's Architecture Shop what disappears is the anticipated exhibition. By design, the conventional exhibition is a series of representations—drawings, models, photographs—proto-architecture, the before or after image of architecture or signs of architecture. Removed from actual scale, temporal or cultural conditions these signs can be understood as abstract forms or mechanical reproductions. The critical distance accompanying these representations and their suggestions imposes a need for delayed gratification, a leap of faith, information provided by past experience, or an alternate reality. The new reality thus becomes what is in front of us—small objects, graphics, material.

With Jean Nouvel's Architecture Shop, a new function is inserted into Storefront's space, creating a total physical effect that defines a present space. In this ongoing immediate present, the viewing body is in motion. There are thousands of still or moving images. Space unfolds in the continuous present. There are objects to look at and consider while individual regard exists concurrently with the surrounding architectural space, blurring the distinction between standing back and looking at an exhibit and getting inside it.



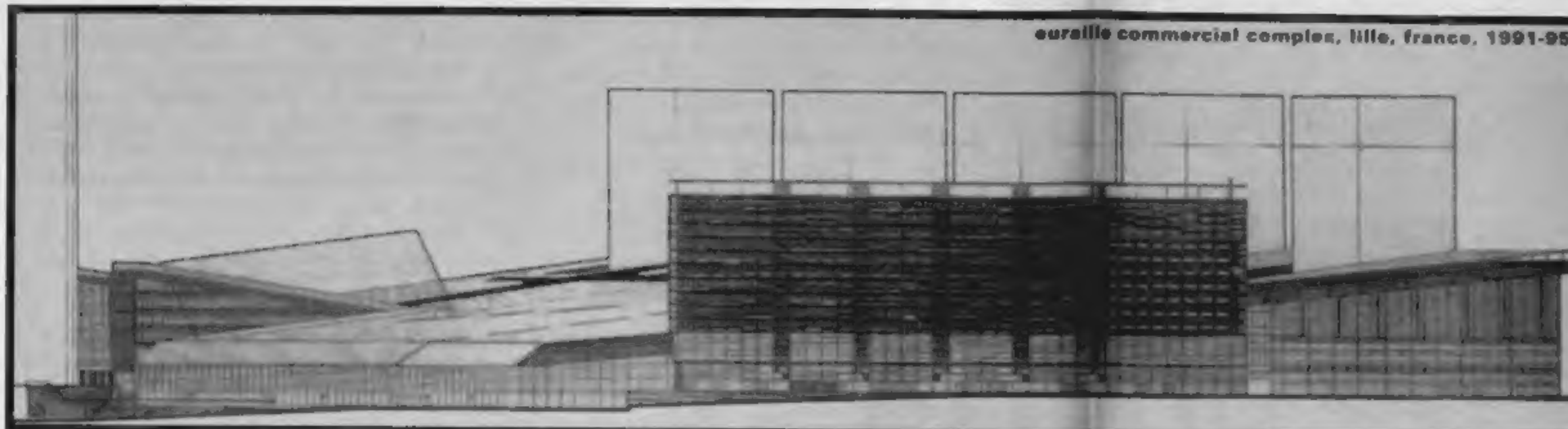
lyon opera house, france, 1986-93

Like the transitional cinematic moment between one image and the next, Nouvel's re-arrangement of expectations, either material or conceptual invites anticipation. The rounded mass of his CLM/B800 office building follows a sequence of similarly formed existing barges moored along the Seine River, subverting the expected permanence of a headquarters address into a suggested site in motion. Paris 16th-19th century urbanism lines the river up to the Institute of the Arab World. This building, which echoes the contours of the river banks directs the eye and the mind to the contemporaneity of the nearby university buildings and other late 20th century developments. In the instance of the Architecture Shop, a "storefront" becomes what it announces itself to be in and amongst its surroundings. Or does it?

These spaces define themselves out of surrounding demographic, historic and human factors specific to the site and use, and thus are contextualized in a way that is more than a vague integration of objects into the landscape. At the same time, their combination of explicit specificity with material effects and intellectual suggestion demands reaction.

Individual reactions are necessary both emotionally and politically to free ourselves from passivity. As the consumer has but pre-selected choices, in an election or at the grocery store, selecting one of the options is hardly a choice at all. But to examine the nature of the decision behind a choice is an altogether active prospect. The connection to sensory effects have been both described by philosophers and affected by convincing media and technological incursions into sensory realms. Aesthetic perception, a pre-intellectual neurological order, is subject to continual shocks in absorbing the plethora of available stimuli in order to make an informed decision. Walk down any city street, turn on any television and you will be confronted by a bombardment of matter to pass through and dissect. Jean Nouvel's projects offer us these challenges while we are surrounded by them.

Of course, we can not make decisions all the time. The apolitical, unemotional response to the demands of constant evaluation would be to accept everything at face value in order to avoid fatigue. As with the effects of any excessive behavior, aesthetic perception running on overload leads to an altered state. To combat the onset of this condition, the production of



euralille commercial complex, lille, france, 1991-95

FORUM

ECO-TEC International Forum 4

Corsica, France
October, 1995

With the continuing improvements and capacities of computer-aided mapping and modeling applications, GIS (Geographic Information Services) and the growing utility and use of the Internet for electronic communication, telework has become an option for individuals, businesses, municipalities and beyond. Through an Internet link, a phone line and a computer can connect to an enormous and growing worldwide communication network. One can literally work via these communication lines from any point connected to this network. The ramifications are global, decreasing the need for high density populations to sustain viable growth. Telework and its potential implementation in Corsica was the central theme of the 4th ECO-TEC International Forum. Storefront returned to Corsica to collaborate with the French Association, ECO-TEC-Corse, which formed in response to the 2nd ECO-TEC International Forum held in 1993.

The previous ECO-TEC Forums were the pioneers, introducing the broader philosophical and theoretical frames of reference through a cast of diversified speakers. By contrast, the 1995 edition of ECO-TEC presented a more tightly drawn pool of professional speakers from political, banking and entrepreneurial sectors (with the exception of the speakers from the US—Richard Lowenberg and myself, both representing Storefront). The combination proved to be a successful working interface between responsive local French and Corsican movers and shakers alongside the American "eco-technologists".

As a founder and idea-generator of the ECO-TEC paradigm, I found this Forum's advanced stage of development to be a professionally charged context, quite unlike anything Storefront has tackled before. Dealing with burning current issues has always been a Storefront trademark (Sarajevo, Detroit, the Homeless, Queer Space, etc.), but never before has a situation with such immediate political or economic impact affecting a whole region, presented itself as a basis from and with which to work. The public debates on Telework initiated here in Corsica can have immediate consequences and/or accelerate possible advances. It is even more astounding to realize the tangible effects of these advances in the midst of a cultural situation in Corsica which has largely resisted change and outside influence in this millennium.

Suddenly profound local environmental, social, and developmental concerns allow us to participate in a process of shaping Corsica's future. ECO-TEC's primary concern has been to maintain an environmentally sound terrain, while there is also a strong need to implement viable economic solutions in a land deep in the developmental margins that suffers from depopulation (or, "social desertification," as the more precise translation from the French language would have it), and a lack of economic opportunity for the next generation. In short, ECO-TEC's efforts are aimed at establishing a sustainable regional development for the future.

ECO-TEC provides a theoretical link between ecological awareness and the strategic search for appropriate technologies and brings together a divided island—although not without encountering the obstacles provided by

LECTURE

Jean Nouvel
Recent Works

Wednesday, December 13, 6:30 pm

Wood Auditorium
Avery Hall
The Graduate School of Architecture, Planning,
and Preservation
Columbia University

unanswerable questions concerning Corsican national identity. Political dissidence, torn by the divergent concerns of French Nationalism and Independent statehood have in common a point of agreement on the need for greater political autonomy. European economic and political unity is seen as a gateway to another super-association. More applicable is an association that comprehends the complexities inherent to the micro-regions of the Mediterranean with their parallel problems of economic marginality and a fragile physical environment. The environment in combination with economic instability is in constant danger of destruction, and of having its natural balances tipped by the "cementification" that accompanies desperate infrastructure and commercial development.

ECO-TEC 95's discourse on Telework took as its central focus, Richard Lowenberg's presentation on InfoZone. Lowenberg's research from the Telluride Institute in Colorado became the catalyst for a larger discussion on possible new scenarios for Corsica's future sustainable development. The Telluride Institute has developed InfoZone as a virtual community database that can be used by rural and remote communities in the Rocky Mountains around Telluride to gain access to education, health care sources, economic and cultural opportunities and political information.

Since 1993, Info Zone has been the first regionally based project, to realize a working telecommunity where a real town, Telluride, would merge with its virtual community. Info Zone started with a simple plan of implementation through a network of access points within the region via Internet connection. Info Zone's emphasis and that of its parent organization, Telluride Institute, on the desire to promote democratic access to new ideas through technological implementation rang very familiar to all involved with ECO-TEC and, indeed to Storefront.

The regional rural scale Info Zone operates within, found a receptive audience in Corsica, where concerns are on a similar regional level. The discussions initiated by the 1995 ECO-TEC Forum centered around the issues surrounding the adaptation of new technologies into tradition-bound cultures like those of Corsica, as well as the real benefits to be gained from the technological hoopla that has occupied center stage in considering new technologies as strategies for the future. Is the use of the Internet and accompanying telecommunication going to be a real or false economic hope for a future community? How can a whole region begin an elaborate computer literacy campaign in an area where electric service rarely functions at full capacity? What are the real benefits for a thinly populated island that is competing for survival in an economic or political reality that is increasingly transnational? What are the costs to be borne for doodling with the implications of a still incompletely understood technology?

Rather than indulge in some high blown critiques, demonizations of the computer as an invader of privacy or society's impending electronic dependency, Richard Lowenberg and I decided instead to discuss significant developments pertaining to telecommunication and the Internet in a manner somewhat different than the image Corsicans have of Telework.



demosmos experimental scheme social housing, nîmes, france, 1985-87

courtyard, institute of the arab world, paris, 1981-87



of Internet access ushers in a new territorializing mechanism, capable of evaluating work and productivity, as well as forming the basis of total control, connecting all accessible (democratic?) information that can create marketing profiles to further classify and stratify society into coded segments of wealth, needs and desires.

ECO-TEC 95, a Forum of two cities, Bastia and Ajaccio was coordinated by Jean Pierre Vernet. The Forums have been graciously financed by the Corsican Chambers of Commerce. Storefront's participation was in large part funded by the generosity of the National Endowment for the Arts International Program.

Amerigo Marras
November, 1995



idea house competition, 1988

BOOK OPENING

The New American Ghetto
Camilo José Vergara

December 14, 6:30-8:30 PM
Storefront for Art and Architecture

Urban ghettos, as intrinsic to the identity of the United States as New England villages, national parks, and leafy suburbs, nevertheless remain unique in their social and physical isolation from the nation's mainstream. Semi-rained, discarded, and dangerous, ghettos are rarely visited by outsiders.

The New American Ghetto provides an exploration, over nearly two decades, of ghettos in New York, Newark, Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, and smaller cities. Vergara chronicles, through photographs and text, the profound transformations experienced by these places since the riots of the 1960s. He provides direct observations of urban landscapes and interiors, from residential areas and institutions to vacant lots and abandoned factories. He makes successive photographs of the same places, tracking change over time—changes that have made the conditions of today's ghettos profoundly different from those of an earlier era.

Vergara's interviews with residents and historical research contribute to his unique view of the nature and meaning of the American inner city. Termed "a photographic forecast of the demise of urban American," The New American Ghetto brings to light a world of forgotten ruin and struggling reconstruction alive in urban American today.

Rutgers University Press
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